

The Nose Map Analysis

Nikolai Gogol's short story *The Nose* is generally considered to elude meaningful interpretation beyond a categorization as absurd. However, by plotting locations from *The Nose*, a few notable aspects shed light on a deeper meaning. In *The Nose*, not all of the locations were laid out explicitly, so I chose points based on deduction. Yet, I believe that my choices still lend insight into the story by showing the extent of Kovalyov and his nose's journeys within the broader Petersburg context and resulting implications for imperial Russian life.

Kovalyov takes us on an extensive tour of the city in search of his nose. Kovalyov's confrontation with his nose takes place at Kazan Cathedral, representing both impressive imperial achievements and also the internal reflection and conflict often associated with religion. In this case, conflict is played out externally as Kovalyov literally argues with his nose. He then spends some time on Nevsky Prospect before going to the Police Commissioner's house along the Neva, the part of the city where the wealthy and influential live. Next, Kovalyov considers going to the Board of Public Order, but decides against pursuing his problem within bureaucratic government mechanisms. Instead, he chooses to go to the newspaper, with the hope of finding more success outside of the government bureaucracy, but within a different type of tiresome organization. What is notable about the newspaper is its location beyond the Fontanka, in the industrial part of Petersburg. The different places that Kovalyov goes represent a large swath of Petersburg life: religion, government elites, bureaucrats, and the press.

Another important point is the difference between the nose's journey in rumor and reality. In the parts of the journey that are relayed directly, the nose spends its time in much the same area as Kovalyov. However, the rumors that spread about St. Petersburg have the nose living a

glamorous life north of Nevsky Prospect. He is dancing and strolling in an area that is marked with many gardens and historic buildings. The difference between the myth of the nose and its reality points to a more significant difference between how we would like to perceive and report ourselves and our lives. Just as many people's reputations are inflated in rumor, the nose's supposedly exciting life is enabled by gossip and jealousy.

In *The Nose*, what is mentioned is just as significant as what is missing. Neither Kovalyov nor his nose ever go to the Petrograd side or Vasilievsky Island. By leaving these parts of Petersburg out, Gogol tells a story that leaves out the working class not only in theme, but also spatially. The person who gets closest to these areas is Ivan Yakovlevich, a barber and therefore working class man, who lives near his customers for the sake of convenience. Gogol was known for his defense of the Romanovs and autocratic monarchy which is evident in his writing by way of absence. *The Nose* reveals the absurdity of imperial bureaucracy, but it makes no moves toward changing the status quo. Instead, it exists wholly within the imperial space.